



31.7.26

Helo Scott

It was good to speak to you today, to hear of the campaign to save the Tumble 'Workies' and to share some of our experience of doing something rather similar here in Gwynedd.

I absolutely believe you are on the right track and if we can help and share more thoughts as things progress, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

My primary comments would be:

- Draw on people's warm memories of the place in its heyday by all means but don't limit yourselves to just keeping it going as it is or was. Don't be afraid to reimagine it from top to bottom as the facility which your community would like it be in the 21st century and believe you can achieve that.
- Make sure you involve the whole community from the beginning. Make it clear that it will be family friendly and multi-purpose. Ask everyone what they would like from it and base your plans on those responses. Also ask what they might be willing to do to help – volunteer? Invest? Run clubs?
- Create a medium-term business plan which reflects those ambitions – 7-10 years

Our own experience is this:

Bear in mind that Llandwrog is a much smaller place than Tymbel – 400 inhabitants, not 4,000.

Our pub had been closed since 2017 and went on sale during Covid in early 2021. The danger was that it would be sold as a private dwelling and that the only community facility we had would be lost for ever. A small group got together, decided that something had to be done and called a Zoom meeting to which 120 people tuned in. We decided that the Community Benefit Society model was the one which would work best for us. All of us were motivated by the need to do our best for our community, while trying to ensure that there would be a viable business model.

At that first public meeting we invited pledges in the form of 12 month loans which would allow us to make a bid for the property. We were astonished when 33 people pledged more than £700,000. That allowed us to agree a price with the seller and while searches etc took place to set about creating the Business Plan and Community Share Offer. We received a huge amount of free help from Cwmpas in doing so. We adopted the model Rules created by the Plunkett Foundation more or less in their entirety. These have worked well and we also received sound advice from specialists appointed by them.

We set ourselves a 7 week deadline from launching the Share Offer to reach our target of £400,000 and created quite a high profile publicity campaign with videos of support from stars of stage, sport and screen. Don't be shy. The Gwendraeth has a great name and place in Welsh life. We were surprised by how much support we got from outside the village. About half came from a 25 mile radius; a quarter from the rest of Wales and the rest from all over the world. We told a good story and people liked it and bought into it.

Having completed the purchase in June 2021, without needing to draw on the loans, we started applying for grants to allow us to re-roof and re-point walls etc. The essential point is that there are a number of grants available which are exclusively targeted at organisations which exist to serve their communities. They are not given automatically and a good deal of work is involved in making the applications but they open the door to additional capital over and above what you can raise from the share offer. New ones are created from time to time. We were lucky enough to be one of the first organisations in Wales to benefit from the previous UK Government's 'Levelling Up' policy, and we have also managed to secure grants from the Welsh Government and more recently, the National Lottery.

From the beginning we wanted an extended, attractive, modern, family-friendly facility – not just the pub as it was - but everyone was keen to re-open as soon as possible, with Christmas 2021 as the target. This is where the volunteers came in – cleaning, gardening, painting, getting the place in some sort of shape just in time. Then we re-opened the old kitchen by Easter at the same time as agreeing a work plan for the roofing etc, which we managed to complete without closing down.

It took a further share and loan issue, plus numerous grant applications again before we eventually closed in June 2024 for our full refurbishment and new extension, which were delivered finally in November 2025.

Since then we have been trading successfully. We have a beautiful restaurant area which is also in use as a community space; there are five bedrooms for B and B; a second community space; new parking and a new kitchen – as well as having transformed the interior. It was a big, expensive plan – far more expensive than we had originally envisaged but with wide support from a variety of sources the cost has been covered. We made small financial losses during our first four years of trading (bearing in mind though that we were closed for a total of 20 months) but this year we expect to make a profit of between £30,000 and £60,000 on a turnover of more than £1million.

Some community pubs decide to look for a tenant for the whole business. That is certainly an option to consider. The great advantage is that it lessens the burden on the Committee who are all volunteers. Others try to run it all themselves- as we did originally, only to find that we were losing money on the food side.

Our system now is that the catering (food) is undertaken by an independent local company on an income and cost-sharing basis while we run the bar and rooms, employing a manager and staff to do so – as well as the organisation of the community events which are an important part of what we do. On the whole this works well, since the catering company is motivated to make a profit in which we, eventually, share.

Each location will be different of course. We are in a tourist-friendly area which gives us a big boost in the summer. But we have been pleasantly surprised by just how much year-round business there is, drawing in locals from quite a wide area to eat, socialise and be entertained. We were amazed by the demand for Christmas parties – running from late November into New Year and birthday celebrations also seem to be quite a big thing – for all ages. We have had numerous teas for christenings and funerals and next year we will have a couple of weddings as well. We don't have Sky Sport but we do make a fuss of Wales games and big events like the World Cup.

Our social and community events programme is extensive and well-supported with clubs often created on the basis of suggestions made by members of the community. Currently or recently we have regular groups / clubs / teams for:

- Pool
- Darts
- Welsh conversation
- French conversation
- Gardening
- Crochet
- Young people's group
- Walking group
- Reading
- Weekly coffee morning
- Subsidised winter lunches
- Chess and board games
- Poetry
- Chair-based keep-fit
- Folk music sessions

We have a monthly quiz-night and a music event at least every two months. Last month we held a pub Eisteddfod and 'Thanks for the memory' sessions where people brought along their old photos and memorabilia. Films with local connections have been shown.

This activity is all over and above the normal, spontaneous socialising which happens over a pint, a meal or a glass of wine. NONE OF THIS WAS HAPPENING BEFORE. The degree to which all this contributes to helping people make connections and reducing loneliness and therefore improving well-being allround cannot be exaggerated.

One caveat – it is bound to be a lot of work. We are fortunate in that we have a strong committee from different age-groups able to bring a range of valuable skills to bear. We have sub-committees for Day to Day; the Building; and Events and Publicity. On top of that we have a number of others volunteering regularly to help with things like keeping the pub's lines (pipes) clean, gardening etc. Day-to day operations such as bar service, etc are

done by employed staff. In the absence of a single person who is in charge of everything, a lot falls on the shoulders of committee members. They will need to be in it for the long haul and to feel they have the full support of the community as well as reinforcements from time to time.

But it can be an incredible worthwhile experience, enriching life for all concerned.

I very much hope that Tymbl comes together to do for your community something similar to what I think we are managing to do here.

Pob dy amunioad da

Ar ran Menter Ty'n Llan

Huw Jones

Trysorydd